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ABSTRACT

Narrative observations were made of kindergarten through fourth grade students' challenges of their peers' inappropriate behavior and of the responses made to the challenges. Approximately 90 hours of observation in 10 classrooms yielded 728 occasions in which an interchange began with one child challenging another. Three types of responses to challenges (i.e., Remedy, Defiance, Other) were observed. The first and second most frequent responses were Remedy and Defiance, respectively. Challenges were (1) rated according to how explicitly they communicated inappropriateness and responsibility, and (2) divided into four types, according to the terms in which they were issued (i.e., most challenges were stated in terms of the challenged "misstep" or in terms of the appropriate behavior desired). Analyses revealed that both challenge type and challenge explicitness influenced the type of response observed in the interchange. Remedies were much more likely and defiance much less likely when the challenge was stated in terms of both the misbehavior and the desired behavior. Generally, remedies were most likely to occur when challenges were more explicit and defiance was more likely when challenges were less explicit. Boys showed a small but significant tendency to challenge more explicitly than girls, but the challenges of girls were more likely to be responded to with remedies. Additional results and implications of the findings are discussed. (Author/RH)

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"XYZ-PDQ!"

THE TERMS AND EFFECTS OF CHILDREN'S CHALLENGES

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"XYZ-PDQ!"

THE TERMS AND EFFECTS OF CHILDREN'S CHALLENGES

When a participant in a social interchange behaves in a way that is inappropriate or awkward, there are generally acceptable ways in which the behavior may be challenged and the miscreant can be given an opportunity to make amends or repair the situation. A challenge is defined as any verbal or non-verbal act which calls into question the appropriateness or worthiness of another person's behavior or personal characteristics. For example, the challenge, "XYZ - PDQ!" was observed among the children in our data set. As best we could determine, the meaning of this challenge is, "Examine Your Zipper - Pretty Damn Quick!" The ability of interactants to produce acceptable and understandable challenges to each other's behavior is probably critical to the maintenance of face-to-face encounters. The refinement of this ability may be an important indicator of developing social interaction skills.

Narrative observations were made of the challenges that occurred among kindergarten through fourth grade school children in open classrooms. Approximately 90 hours of observation in 10 classrooms yielded 728 occasions in which an interchange began with one child challenging another. Interchanges in which a teacher participated were excluded for the analyses reported here. Two observers were present for approximately 25% of the time and the two recorded the same interchanges 79.3% of the time.

Transcripts of these interchanges were independently coded, turn-by-turn, by two coders. Challenge turns, which initiated these interchanges, were

recognized with 97.2% agreement. Three types of response turns to challenges were observed. The most common response was a Remedy. A Remedy is defined as any effort by the challenged individual to repair the situation, and to assure the other participants of his or her good will and willingness to cooperate in the future. Apologies, excuses, justifications and admissions were all considered types of remedies. Remedy turns were recognized with 95.5% agreement. In response to the challenge, "You stole my pencil!" a remedy might be, "Oh, I didn't know this was your pencil."

The second most frequently observed response to a challenge was defiance. Defiance turns indicated antagonism toward the challenger or toward the rule allegedly broken. An example is the defiant turn, "Too bad for you sucker." Refusals to cooperate, threats, and counter-challenges were all considered types of defiant responses. Defiance turns were recognized with 92.8% agreement.

The third category of response turns, termed Other, included inaudible, ambiguous and off-the-topic remarks, and was classified with 97.3% agreement. Page 1 of the handout presents three example interchanges. Examples 1 and 3 contain remedy responses; example 2 contains a defiant response.

Based partly on Fillmore's 1971 discussion of verbs of judging, we proposed that there are two defining features of a challenge. First, it must communicate that the challenger considers the act or outcome in question to be inappropriate; and second, it must communicate that the challenger considers the person challenged to be responsible. Either of these two things may be stated explicitly or implied indirectly. Table 1 on page 2 of the

handout provides examples. In the upper left cell, "Jeremy, you made a terrible mess in the art center," is an example of a challenge that is explicit on both counts. It clearly communicates the inappropriateness of the outcome in question (a terrible mess) and the responsibility of the person challenged (Jeremy made it). In the lower cell is an example of a challenge that is implicit on both counts. Although the challenge, "Jeremy, look at the art center," does not directly state that anything is wrong with the art center, or that Jeremy is responsible, both of these are indirectly communicated.

Using this framework, each challenge was rated on a scale from 1-3, according to how explicitly it communicated inappropriateness and responsibility, where a score of 3 indicted the most explicit challenges. The two scales were summed to form an Explicitness rating. Inter-rater reliability was 86.3%.

The challenges were further divided into four types, according to the terms in which they were issued. Most challenges were stated in terms of the challenged misstep, as in "You are standing on my foot." Alternatively, challenges could be stated in terms of the appropriate behavior desired: "Please get off my foot." Some challenges stated neither the inappropriate, nor the desired behavior: "Oh! My aching toe!" Some state both: "You're on my foot and I wish you'd get off." These classifications were made with 83.3% reliability.

A series of log-linear chi square analyses revealed that both challenge type and challenge explicitness influenced the type of response observed in

the second turn of the interchange. Table 2, on page 3 of the handout, shows that remedies were much more likely (94.4%) and defiance much less likely (2.78%) when the challenge was stated in terms of both the misbehavior and the desired behavior. Remedies were least likely when the challenge was stated in neither of those terms. Thus, the example, "You're on my foot and I wish you'd get off," would be more effective in producing a remedial response than "Oh, my aching toe!" Challenges stated in terms of the appropriate behavior were more effective in eliciting remedies than those stated in terms of the misstep. Thus, "Please get off my foot," was more effective than "You're standing on my toe."

From Table 3, it can be seen that remedies were more likely to occur when challenges were more explicit -- except at the very highest level of explicitness, 6, where there was a slight decline in remedy responses. Defiance was more likely when challenges were less explicit. This tendency to respond more positively to explicit challenges did not differ with grade. However, there was an effect of grade on the explicitness rating, showing that challenges of the 2nd and 3rd graders tended to be more explicit than either the kindergarten-first or fourth graders, LRX^2 (8) = 21.20, $p < .007$.

An interesting series of effects was related to the sex of the perpetrator of the challenge. Boys showed a small but significant tendency to be more explicit than girls, LRX^2 (4) = 16.68, $p < .002$. As we saw in Table 3, explicit challenges were more successful than subtle challenges in eliciting remedies, so we <u>should</u> find boys getting more remedies than girls. In fact, the challenges of girls are more likely to be responded to with remedies, LRX^2 (2) = 6.85, $p < .033$.

There are two different non-significant trends which may help account for this apparent inconsistency. First, notice in Table 3, that explicitness was effective in producing remedies up to a point, but that the most explicit challenges (which tended to be blunt accusations) were somewhat less effective. Boys were more likely than girls to produce these challenges. Second, we noticed that girls were more likely than boys to state their challenges in terms of the appropriate behavior. Even though these challenges tended to be relatively implicit in communicating inappropriateness and responsibility, they were quite effective in eliciting remedies, as can be seen in Table 2. Thus, it appears that boys were using the least effective of the explicit challenges, while girls were using the most effective of the subtler challenges.

This research raises some interesting questions about the development of the ability to produce and respond to subtle challenges. It seems to us that adults often produce challenges which are purposely subtle and indirect. For example, "Oh, are you in line here?" or "Excuse me. I thought you said you were coming at three o'clock." The school-aged children in our study were generally more effective in resolving conflicts with remedies when their challenges were explicit. This did not differ significantly with age over the age range we sampled, kindergarten through fourth grade. Are explicit remedies also more effective for adults, or do adults respond more positively to subtler challenges? If subtler forms are more effective for adults, at what point in development do children start to give remedies to subtler challenges? We found that the explicitness of challenges seemed to peak in

the second and third grades, with fourth graders producing somewhat more implicit challenges, though they still responded more positively to explicit challenges. Perhaps children a year or two older begin to give remedies to the subtler forms.

The finding that children respond more positively to more direct challenges has implications for the way teachers and parents interact with young children. Young children might not recognize that subtle challenges require remedies. If teachers and parents tend to use these kinds of challenges, this may be the source of misunderstanding and conflict. For example, if a teacher produces the challenge, "What did you say?" and the child does not understand this to be a challenge, the child may respond by repeating the inappropriate thing just said. The teacher is likely to interpret this as defiance. These kinds of misunderstandings may be especially likely when students and teachers come from different social class or ethnic backgrounds.

We are now analyzing data which included student - teacher interactions, and future research is planned which will examine social class differences in the terms and effects of children's challenges.

Example Interchanges

Example 1

Interchange 719. Spelling Center. 3rd-4th grade.
John, Jason, Fran, Michael and Jonathan are sitting around a table working on the spelling assignment. Jason stands up.

1.a. John-Jason: XYZ - PDQ!

2.a. (Jason quickly zips his pants.)

Example 2

Interchange 605. Art Center. 3rd-4th grade.
Stephanie, Angela, Michelle and Becca are sitting around a round table. All are coloring except Stephanie, who is reading a book.

Stephanie starts singing the words to her book.

1.a. Michelle-Stephanie: Sing for us later, honey chile.

2.a. (Stephanie keeps on singing the words to her book, without looking up.)

Example 3

Interchange 198. Language Arts Center. 1st-2nd grade.
Jamey, Sunita, Jeff and Greg are working on the assignment and talking. Greg's voice is very hoarse.

1.a. Jamey-Greg: Clear your throat.

2.a. Greg: I can't.

b. Greg: I got a horse.

3.a. Jamey: Sounds funny.

4.a. Greg: I know.

Table 1

Examples of Explicit and Subtle Components of a Challenge

Inappropriateness[b] \ Responsibility[a]	Explicit	Subtle
Explicit	Jeremy, you made a terrible mess in the art center.	Jeremy, look at the terrible mess in the art center.
Subtle	Jeremy, look what you did in the art center.	Jeremy, look at the art center.

[a] The challenger communicates that the person challenged is Responsible for the act in question.

[b] The challenger communicates that the act in question is Inappropriate.

Table 2

Per Cent of Challenges of Each Type Responded to by Remedy, Defiance and Other Turn Types

Type of Challenge	Type of Response		
	Remedy	Defiance	Other
In terms of misstep	58.02	30.56	11.42
In terms of appropriate behavior	64.14	29.56	6.30
In terms of neither	55.50	33.50	11.00
In terms of both	94.44	2.78	2.78

Note: Log-ratio x^2 (6) = 21.29, $p < .001$.

Table 3

Per Cent of Challenges at Each Level of Explicitness Responded to by Remedy, Defiance and Other Turn types

Explicitness of Challenge (Sum of Responsibility and Appropriatness)	Type of Response		
	Remedy	Defiance	Other
2	47.00	41.00	12.00
3	53.00	37.00	10.00
4	65.00	28.00	7.00
5	67.00	22.00	11.00
6	55.00	36.00	9.00

Note: Log-ratio X^2 (8$ = 15.32, $p < .05$.